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ABSTRACT

This study examined the future staffing trends in Oregon's public schools, particularly with regard to teachers and counselors, within the context of the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century (HB 3565). Twenty-nine persons were interviewed, primarily superintendents, superintendent/principals, and assistant superintendents. Budget limitations are causing districts to curtail hiring of professional staff. For those districts able to hire professional staff, the applicant pool for teachers and administrators appears to be generally adequate although the counseling applicant pool is troubling for some districts. Although some small districts are having trouble locating substitute teachers, in general the applicant pool appears adequate. The employment market for teachers and administrators will likely be weak if school districts continue to face budget constraints. Districts recommend that teacher preparation programs provide more intensive practicums in multiple grade levels and school settings. Interviewees indicated that training of professional staff is very important although funding is a major problem. Training in the areas of special learning needs, restructured curriculum, and health and social problems is needed. Many districts intend to wait for leadership, direction, and funding support with regard to school reform. (IAH)

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1992 SCHOOL STAFFING TRENDS STUDY

completed for

The Joint Education Boards

- Board of Education and Board of Higher Education -

State of Oregon

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Oregon Department of Education
Oregon State System of Higher Education
Teacher Standards and Practices Commission
Oregon Association of Colleges of Teacher Education

1992 SCHOOL STAFFING TRENDS STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

The Joint Boards requested information in Fall 1991 on supply and demand related to the educator professions, particularly on teachers and counselors within the context of the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century (HB 3565). Staff from the State System of Higher Education, in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Education, the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission and the Oregon Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, took the lead in designing a study of future staffing trends in Oregon's public schools, particularly with regard to the use of counselors.

The study was designed to interview 30 randomly selected school districts representing large (defined as employing professional staff of 400+), medium-sized (staff of 99-400), and small districts (98 or fewer professional staff). Some of the districts were already known to be involved in reform initiatives, others were thought to be less involved. The Oregon Department of Education selected the districts to be involved in the study.

A list of interview questions was developed by staff during Winter 1992. On March 27 a letter was sent to Superintendents of the 30 districts, notifying them of the Joint Boards interests in learning more about their future staffing trends and seeking their involvement. A copy of the interview questions was provided.

The State System of Higher Education secured the assistance of Marge Mohoric and Ivan Hernandez, two University of Oregon doctoral students, as Research Assistants. Both have substantial prior experience in interviewing techniques, one as a former school superintendent and the other as a training director for a major business. They contacted the districts to learn who the Superintendent had identified to serve as interviewee, scheduled telephone interviews, and conducted all interviews. One district elected not to participate because of its small size and lack of time.

The interviews with 29 districts occurred during April and May 1992. This is a summary of the interview findings. More complete data summaries are being provided to the Oregon Department of Education, the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, the Oregon Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, and interested others.

Inquiries about the study should be referred to Dr. Holly Zanville, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Oregon State System of Higher Education, who served as project director for this Joint Boards study.

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THE RESPONDENTS

Of the 29 persons interviewed, 16 are superintendents, superintendent/principals, or assistant superintendents; three are directors of curriculum and instruction; two are principals or vice principals of schools; one is a head teacher; three are directors of human resources/personnel services; and four are in an "other" category.

The respondents' average number of years in their current position is 3.7, with a range of two to 16 years. The average number of years of the respondents with their current school is seven; the range is two to 26 years. The average total years of the respondents in education is 23, with a range from 14 to 38 years.

The districts represent a variety of student growth patterns over the past five years. Ten districts report that their student enrollment declined in the last five years; seven indicate their enrollment increased; and twelve indicate their enrollments have remained about the same. More of the small-sized districts report declining enrollment situations. Most of the mid-sized districts report enrollment growth or stable enrollments. The large-sized districts are equally divided -- some report increased enrollment, others decreased.

RECENT HIRING PATTERNS

The demand for teachers, counselors, and administrators in the 29 districts is reported to be limited in the past two years with little hiring by a majority of the districts. Most districts report stable or declining student enrollments, requiring low replacement needs. At the same time districts report low staff turnover.

Thirty-six percent of the districts report they hired zero to one professional staff in the past two years; 29 percent hired two to five; and 36 percent hired six or more.

Recent average turnover/replacement rates for all the reporting districts has been running around ten percent annually. Districts report that most professionals are retiring in their early 60's. The range is from 53 to 65 years of age. The districts participating in the interviews report few retirements at the present time. Most anticipate significantly more retirements in four to five years. However, with downsizing occurring in many districts due to budget constraints, many districts are not planning to replace positions vacated because of retirements.

The leave rate of professional staff to work at another school is reported to be low (86 percent of districts report a "low" rate). The leave rate for professional staff to work in another sector is reported to be low as well (96 percent of districts reported a "low" leave rate).

Recent Retirement Rates

Low	89 percent of districts
Medium	11 percent of districts
High	none of districts

Recent Leave Rates to Work at Another School

Low	86 percent of districts
Medium	7 percent of districts
High	4 percent of districts

Recent Leave Rates to Work in Other Sector

Low	96 percent of districts
Medium	4 percent of districts
High	none of districts

APPLICANT POOL

In order to learn about the adequacy of the applicant pool, districts were asked how many applications they typically receive for open professional positions; whether the applicant pool size was adequate for their needs; how many professional hires they have had in the last two years and what percent/number that was of their total professional staff; whether the majority of applicants in the pool during the last two years were qualified for the position and what types of training/experiences would make applicants better qualified; and what specific skills they prefer new hires have coming into the system that they do not have.

A majority of districts report that the size of the applicant pool for open teaching and administrative positions is adequate; less than half of the districts, however, report that the applicant pool for counselors is adequate:

- 70 percent of districts report that the size of the administrative pool is adequate to meet their needs.
- 67 percent of district report the size of the teacher pool is adequate to meet their needs.
- 43 percent of districts report that the size of the counseling pool is adequate to meet their needs.

The range of the size of districts' teacher, counselor, and administrative applicant pools is quite varied by the size of the district. Large-sized districts report the largest applicant pools for all categories of staff; small-sized districts report the smallest.

Range of Size of Applicant Pools for Open Positions

	Large Districts	Mid-Sized	Small
Teachers	200 - 1600	12 - 150	3 - 100
Counselors	0 - 80	3 - 50	1 - 10
Administrators	40 - 200	10 - 150	6 - 30

The majority of districts with open positions (61 percent) report that most of the applicants for teaching positions are qualified for their positions. However, many comment that they want better trained, more flexible, more broadly trained than content specific, and process-skilled teachers. Many (55 percent) are critical of practice teaching experiences because they are not providing student teachers with experience in different grade levels and with different schools settings. Some districts report they have too many applicants for open positions. Areas cited as oversupply by some districts are health education, physical education, and social studies.

Districts cite a number of special skills they would prefer new hires have coming into the schools that they do not now have (lack of some of these skills caused some districts to classify applicants as unqualified):

68% better student teaching experience, specifically experience in a variety of classrooms and grade levels
61% variety in teaching methods
54% team or group skills/interpersonal
46% broader certification flexibility
43% ITIP, TESA, cooperative learning, whole language approach, learning styles
36% integrated curriculum, creativity in approaching curriculum
32% computers and technology
29% bilingual, ESL
28% ability to teach multi grades
25% having work ethic, commitment to profession
21% dealing with parents and dysfunctional families
14% teaching in basic skills, written/spoken skills
11% ethnic diversity awareness, cross cultural

Most districts report that applicants for administrative and counseling positions are qualified for their positions. Some districts indicate that not all the applicants for high school counselor positions are qualified though certified. Also, some districts point out the need for administrative applicants to have more experience. The issue of low salary and location was mentioned by a number of districts in attracting the best administrative applicants.

Districts also cite a need for more applicants for positions in occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy.

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On the Applicant Pool . . .

"The majority are certified but 50 percent aren't qualified. They need to be able to do some of everything; flexibility is important. They need to have a "can do" and "will do" attitude."

"Some of them were not dynamic people, not interesting. It must be apparent when they come through the teacher system of education that they are not capable of teaching kids. They need to be told before they are student teachers that they're not communicating with kids. Whether it's a skill lack or lack of personality, they need to be told."

"Would like to see extensive student teaching. Applicants are content trained but need more than a quarter/semester of student teaching. Go with a practicum where they get to teach multiple subjects, grade levels, gain knowledge of what it takes to be a teacher, understand that one needs to make a commitment. We don't want to hire those that aren't sure they want to teach. We need more programs like the fifth year."

"Take the statutes such as OAR:584-20-010, not one teacher had seen. Three pages of what is ethical/what is meant by competence. I went through college, administrative training, and hadn't seen them What does dignity of all persons mean? What does consistency, knowledge, and application imply? Teachers did not know they should not teach religious beliefs. Too many in teacher education are weak -- there are too many teachers -- the field is overpopulated. Yet most of them are not broad enough; they need more training not just more content."

"They need an internship rather than student teaching. Should have a prolonged, intense experience. Quite a few need work in basic skills and how to teach basic skills. Quite a few wrote poorly. Some need to place priority on the student and skill in working as a team"

"They need to know what it takes to teach, be a school person, work with students before and after school. The colleges don't establish the expectation. I question whether most teachers want to work at teaching."

"Elementary teachers need more experience in cooperative learning, integrated curriculum (teaching math and science, language and history), thematic instruction, use of technology, how to work with TAG, how to organize content and instruction, classroom management, how to grade."

"Need more training and experience in working with special education students that have been mainstreamed, TAG, handling integrated curriculum,work with homeless, single parents, drugs. They need more functional student teaching and diversified experiences."

"They need to have multi-age experience. We need creative people. Teachers that teach in more than one grade can't use the same stuff year after year."

"All have been qualified but if I had a magic wand they would have more experience -- be able to teach in a multi-grade classroom. The new ones need much more experience in classroom management, how to motivate students and teach more than one grade level."

"As a rule we go with experienced teachers."

"They're adequate in all areas except -- they have an inability to fill out application forms, grammar, spelling, not following instructions in filling out forms."

"We have a lot of temporaries because of pregnancies, illnesses this year, and we feel they're better trained than ever."

"Certification is not the same as qualified (experiences such as writing skills are needed). I've been in schools since 1968. Some of the best teachers I've had come out of sociology, political science -- NOT teacher education schools."

"We need to teach them how to handle kids without hurting them. The people skills are lacking. Subject specific information can be learned but the teacher who does not care to learn to handle kids should not make it through student teaching."

"Some are certified but not qualified to the standards we need. Interpersonal skills are missing, for example."

"If all regular education teachers were trained like special education teachers we'd be okay. The issue of alcohol and drug babies and our staff knowing how to work with those kids and teachers understanding is a major one."

"All are licensed but we think 25 percent are not qualified in pupil management strategies, ethnic diversity awareness, being able to teach to individual academic differences. They also need experience working with culturally diverse populations."

"They have the educational backgrounds but they need the personal skills and professional skills for working with students and parents."

"50 percent are not qualified. I'm so glad these questions are being asked. Training is needed in classroom management, how to manage students with special needs, writing and general communications skills are lacking. They also need an understanding of a teacher's legal responsibilities and rights."

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SUBSTITUTE TEACHER POOL

Districts were asked if they had experienced difficulty in securing qualified substitute teachers and whether any areas or disciplines were more difficult to locate substitute teachers.

Small-sized districts report the most difficulty securing substitute teachers (65 percent). The majority of mid-sized districts (66 percent) and large districts (100 percent) report little difficulty locating substitute teachers.

Areas Most Often Cited As Difficult for Locating Substitutes

- mathematics
- chemistry
- physics
- music
- vocational education/shop
- special education
- middle school

On Locating Substitutes . . .

"We have difficulty in times of great demand. Folks are reluctant to come to middle school. There are some subs who we will not ask to come. Sometimes we violate standards and have people volunteer to teach during their prep time. We do a lot of paybacks for that kind of thing."

"We use the ESD but we never have enough. We have two certified people in the community who are at home with their kids and they have been a lifesaver. I go into the classroom often."

"No problems -- we are overflowing except for music. They contact us."

"There is some pool but they would rather teach in a larger school. There is also the problem of securing subs that can't control a classroom. These are certified people!"

"I question the state requirement of having certification for subs."

"Sometimes administrators have to sub."

"We have extreme difficulty. Have had to obtain emergency certification for educational assistants. The hang up is the State Department of Education's requirement of certification for substitutes. The requirement goes way beyond what is needed. Don't understand needing a degree to substitute in shop. The reality is a teacher can sub in any of a number of areas. We pick and choose, try to get a certified sub. Certified does not always mean qualified nor does qualified always necessitate being certified."

FUTURE STAFFING NEEDS

Three major factors are cited as key in predicting future staffing trends among the districts -- the impacts of Measure 5, retirement projections of staff, and school reform impacts. Most of the districts report they are hiring for turnover only. Staffing expansion needed in many districts due to increased student enrollments, changes in curriculum and services, and the like, are not being met by many districts. Districts are projecting increased teacher to student ratios and in many cases report general uncertainty about how staffing needs will be met in the next five years. Planning beyond that appears to be almost an impossibility for districts given the uncertainties of funding.

Districts anticipate the following number of hires will be made in the next two to five years: 66 teachers, 17 counselors, 18 administrators, 10 technical staff, and 16 other -- for a total of 127 professional staff. Large-sized districts account for 61 percent of these projected hires; mid-sized districts 19 percent; and small-sized districts 20 percent.

Measure 5 Impacts . . .

"We want to protect the staff we have. Under Measure 5 this will be tough."

"We are still downsizing for the next three years. I know that with Measure 5 we will lose teaching staff and have increased students and greater need for staff development -- this is very frustrating."

"As Measure 5 hits us, the reality is that there are increasing needs in families needing parenting help. There is more pressure on the schools. We need help to prepare teachers to fill those needs with declining resources. There is a tremendous amount of violence in this logging community; it's exploding."

"We don't see any expansion in staff unless we get significantly more staff support and a turn around in the economy. Will need to address retirements of about 40-50 a year."

"Measure 5 is uncertain. We will probably reduce one in five. Part of what is wrong in education is in hiring. When 45 miles from Portland has 105 applicants for elementary positions, we would interview the top eight. Maybe three of the top eight would find jobs in education. The remainder would leave education because there are no jobs. We can't let good people leave education."

"This is a very threatening time for all of us. We will have people retiring in the next five to ten years. We will not fill those positions."

"This is about as bleak as it can get -- all because of Measure 5. We're expected to grow in student population about 5 percent over the next 10-15 years."

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TRAINING NEEDS FOR STAFF

Most districts report that areas that were of highest priority for training within the last year were not the same as five years ago. The most commonly cited topics presently being addressed in training by districts are as follows (these are the areas in which districts foresee their professional staff needing training in the next five years as well):

- CIM/CAM
- TAG
- cooperative learning
- school improvement
- computers, integration into curriculum
- thematic instruction
- articulation with colleges
- vocational/technical
- learning styles
- blended curriculum
- portfolio assessment
- applied academics
- alcohol and drug abuse
- common curriculum goals
- AIDS

Major sources for meeting training needs are consortial networks, partnership arrangements through the ESD, arrangements with other schools, professional associations, colleges and universities, and consulting with individuals.

On Training . . .

"We need training in designing developmentally appropriate education."

"Our counselors seem to have a lot of difficulty understanding laws on confidentiality (what can be given/reported to others). We have training in that every year."

"We need training in computer technology, site-based education, vocational education, alternative assessment, multicultural education, peer coaching strategies, applied technology."

"All need shared decision-making training."

"Need training to cope with divergent behavior. We are finding that behavior management strategies of special education apply to regular education as they deal with attention deficit, alcohol syndrome, etc."

"We need training for teachers on portfolios and senior projects in the assessment area. Also integrated curriculum, blended classroom."

"Need training in multi-age teaching strategies."

"Need training in crisis intervention and counseling."

"Need to retrain some teachers in applied academics."

"Counselors need training in substance abuse, HIV, advising role."

"We will need help with the process of change. Team building, consensus, modelling."

"Need training on leadership and group decision-making, technology-focused education."

"Need training in stress management, conflict resolution, dealing with drugged/needy kids, low self esteem."

Districts were asked what types of electronic media they have and which, if any, are used for training. Most districts have access to television, audiovisual, VCR's, and personal computers. Some districts are part of Star Schools and bring in programs from outside the state. Some districts are receiving ED-NET programs as well.

On Electronic Media . . .

"Use VCR for training in understanding parents."

"Have done interactive TV with TAG, basic skills, other. Haven't gone with ED-NET -- costs too much."

"Have a library of training and staff development tapes. Most of this type of material is available at the ESD."

"We are 19th C., only TV, VCR. Very limited in computer use. No interactive TV. Money a problem."

"Use ED-NET/Star Schools (Spokane) to tape materials, for foreign language classes, and teacher inservices."

"We use ED-NET for conferences. Use ED-NET/CD ROM in our libraries. When we hook to Channel 1 next year we'll see more courses. Good acceptance of ED-NET, and with budget restraints that may be the only access we'll have."

"Don't have ED-NET but community college has so we use it for inservice training. We have all our libraries with CD ROMS. Junior high has computer server system. Our kids are using computers for everything."

"Use ED-NET, have two satellites. Don't use Channel 1. We use Star Schools for Spanish and inservice."

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THE SCHOOL REFORM MOVEMENT/IMPACTS

Many districts are unsure of where the state is going with HB 3565 and whether dollars will be made available to assist them in school restructuring. Many districts need further direction from the state and will wait to implement new programs until leadership is provided.

Many districts report they are looking at HB 3565 types of activities but are taking no action because of a lack of funds. The most common activities underway by districts related to HB 3565 are site committees, nongraded primaries, and integrated curriculum.

On HB 3565 Impacts . . .

"Don't see 3565 having great impact. CIM/CAM have been discussed as to policy considerations. Current vocational technical will change. Already have 88 percent of seniors going to postsecondary. We question whether it's cost/labor effective to expend time, energy for 12 percent. Will discuss idea of site committee."

"Already have site council. Ungraded raises some questions -- will investigate. Not sure about the rest. Will wait and see what it really means."

"Reality is that without dollars 3565 won't affect our restructuring. We were piloting pre-school, multi-age prior to 3565. We plan to go with this regardless of the Bill. Will do what's best for students but only what we can afford within our operating funds."

"Have been building site committees and plan to experiment with ungraded primary. Will wait with CIM/CAM until they figure out what they mean/what they want. Most feel they are good, we'll wait and see. The fact is we won't do much more than what we identify as important without direction from the state. This also means financing from the state."

"The Bill sets unrealistic goals. Who pays for length of the year? These ideas will take years to install."

"Need specifics from the State Department of Education. I know the CIM and CAM will affect us but we don't know what the requirements are. We need direction."

"I see demands for massive change at the secondary level. We've spent entirely too many years treating every child as if they were an academic and that's silly and may not meet their needs. We've needed a better balance between academic and work-related education (e.g., in math we need more of an applied focus). I don't know what leadership will come from the state. We've had a visit from them but the discussions are very vague. Where will the fiscal support come from?"

"HB 3565 needs to address rural issues. If the dollars aren't there they should scratch the program."

"This is pie in the sky. We will do some with ungraded primary. But most of this won't work. We need resources, people."

"We will do some nongraded primary. We will wait for a model for applied academics and cross curriculum."

"We're talking about ungraded primaries and integrated curriculum but just talk at this time, no committees. We're leaderless -- loose groups now."

"I have a career education background so it all makes sense to me. Work-based education is great. College experience is not for everyone."

"Can't comprehend the logic of 3565 and Measure 5. They don't fit, they are a contradiction."

"Have site committees, but confusion on what site-based means. Site-based management sounds like ultimate form of democracy but if it means committees take over then it is the opposite. We have elected boards which are supposed to set policy/see that schools are run. Anything that changes that is anti-democracy. Some feel that site committees run the day to day. But final decision/ultimate authority rests with the elected body."

"I have some reservations. I am afraid that we will lose identifying with students and encourage teachers to leave education. What we will have is a wider gap between students that learn, want to learn, are fun to teach, and those that go through the motions. As students pass Advanced Mastery as sophomores they will be pulled away. The reason to teach is to have these students as juniors and seniors. Teachers identify with students. We lose this and community colleges become richer. We'll have the lower 70 percent. Yet there is research that states that heterogeneous grouping benefits both the upper and lower groups. We will be left with the lower groups only! What is the value to the system of pulling out the top 20-30 percent? I really question if they have thought out what will happen at the local level.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- Districts are facing an uncertain future, with the budget constraints of Measure 5 and the demands of HB 3565. This uncertainty is having an effect on staffing; districts are not able to hire the professional staff they need to respond to curricular demands and even student enrollment growth because of budget limitations. Even those districts that have the dollars this year are not willing to employ staff if the dollars will not likely be available in another year or two.

- For those districts able to hire professional staff, the applicant pool for teachers and administrators appears generally adequate in size and quality although small-sized districts are experiencing difficulty in attracting enough applicants. The counseling applicant pool is the most troublesome for districts. All districts would like to see more experienced, versatile people in the applicant pool.

- The substitute teacher pool is generally adequate although small-sized districts report some problems locating substitutes. A number of districts question the state's requirement of certification for substitutes. Many districts would like greater flexibility in this area of staffing.

- If school districts continue to face the type of budget constraints identified in these interviews, the employment market for teachers and administrators will likely be weak during the next several years if these 30 districts are representative of others in the state. The market for school counselors should be somewhat better, but again, staffing trends indicate a shifting of some of the counselor's responsibilities, particularly in career advising, to the regular teachers. The teachers who will fare the best in their job search will be those prepared in a number of discipline areas, with strength in a variety of teaching styles, with background in special education (skills in individualizing their teaching styles), those who are bilingual or have foreign language skills, those with interpersonal skills who demonstrate they work effectively with children and parents, and those who evidence a commitment to education and a strong work ethic.

- Districts recommend that teacher preparation programs provide more intensive practica such as long term internships, in multiple grade levels and multiple school settings. Colleges and universities are also encouraged to weed out students early in the process, before student teaching, where interpersonal skills are clearly lacking.

- Training of professional staff is very important for all the districts although funding again is a major problem. Some districts are using more electronic media to meet some of their training needs. This will likely increase in the future, particularly for more rural districts. Topics of concern are different than they were five years ago, and emphasize special learning needs of students, needs for restructured curriculum, multi-age groupings, drug and alcohol abuse, AIDS, and other health and social problems mirrored in our larger society.

- Many districts report they are taking a wait and see attitude with regard to school reform. They will wait for direction and leadership from the state about the requirements of HB 3565. They will also wait until funding support is provided except in cases where they have already decided that certain initiatives should be implemented in response to local priorities (for example, site-based committees or nongraded primaries).

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For further information about the 1992 School Staffing Trends Study:

Office of Academic Affairs

Oregon State System of Higher Education

P.O. Box 3175
Eugene, OR 97403
(503) 346-5724